

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 2414

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM PE
SUBJ: GOP REINSTATES HUNGER STRIKERS

REF: (A) LIMA 2345, (B) LIMA 2326, (C) STATE 2068055

SUMMARY: HUNGER STRIKERS PROTESTING UNJUST FIRING FROM
THEIR JOBS HAVE BEEN REINSTATED IN A MARCH 19 PRESIDENTIAL
ORDER. THE GOP WARNED, HOWEVER, THAT THIS ACT SHOULD NOT BE
INTERPRETED AS PRECEDENT FOR FUTURE ACTS OF FORCE OR PRESSURE.
PERU'S HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD HAS BEEN ENHANCED BY THE REINSTATEMENT
AND OTHER RECENT ACTIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. IN AN UNEXPECTED MOVE ON PALM SUNDAY (MARCH 19), PRESIDENT
MORALES BERMUDEZ DECREED THE IMMEDIATE REINSTATEMENT OF 78 HUNGER
STRIKERS IN THEIR PREVIOUS JOBS. JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS AGAINST
THE STRIKERS WILL BE DROPPED AND ALL RESULTING PENAL ANTECEDENTS
WILL BE NULLIFIED. THE MINISTRIES OF THE INTERIOR AND LABOR ARE
CHARGED WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ORDER.

2. THE PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNIQUE ALLUDES TO THE HUMANISM OF THE
PERUVIAN REVOLUTION, THE CHRISTIAN THOUGHT THAT INSPIRES IT AND
THE ADVENT OF HOLY WEEK IN ITS PREAMBULATORY SENTENCES. IT ALSO
STATES CLEARLY THAT THE REINSTATEMENT SHOULD NOT BE INTERPRETED
AS A PRECEDENT-SETTING MOVE NOR ONE THAT WILL JUSTIFY FUTURE ACTS
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OF FORCE OR PRESSURE WHICH THREATEN THE INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON,
PROPERTY OR PUBLIC ORDER.

3. COMMENT. PRELIMINARY COMPARISON OF NAMES IN PRESIDENTIAL
COMMUNIQUE WITH LISTS PROVIDED BY LOCAL AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
OFFICE INDICATE THAT GOP ACTION AFFECTS MOST OR ALL OF HUNGER
STRIKERS. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NUMBER AFFECTED BY REINSTATEMENT

(78) AND NUMBER REPORTED IN REFTEL (APPROXIMATELY 100) MAY BE DUE TO SOME STRIKERS HAVING ABANDONED PROTEST FOR MEDICAL OR OTHER REASONS. UK POL COUNSELOR, IN CALL ON VICE MINISTER INTERIOR MARCH 17, WAS TOLD THAT THE NUMBER OF HUNGER STRIKERS HAD BEEN REDUCED TO 83. EMBASSY HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICER HAS REQUESTED INFORMATION ON COMPLETENESS OF LIST FROM AMNESTY REPRESENTATIVE. HUMANITARIAN CONCERN OVER THE SITUATION OF THE HUNGER STRIKERS EXPRESSED BY US AND UK EMBASSIES (REFTEL A) WAS PROBABLY HELPFUL IN GETTING THE GOP TO ACCEDE TO THEIR REINSTATEMENT. IN TWO SEPARATE CONVERSATIONS WITH VICE MINISTER OF INTERIOR, POL COUNSELOR NOTED GOP SENSITIVITY TO US INTEREST IN STRIKE. IT IS WORTHY OF NOTE THAT THE REINSTATEMENT OF THE HUNGER STRIKERS TOOK THE FORM OF A PRESIDENTIAL ORDER RATHER THAN A CABINET-APPROVED DECREE. INTERIOR MINISTER CISNEROS AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE CABINET HAVE REPORTEDLY BLOCKED THE PRESIDENT'S EARLIER EFFORTS TO REINSTATE HUNGER STRIKERS, ALLEGING THAT THE GOVERNMENT MUST AVOID SIGNS OF WEAKNESS OR VACILLATION IN THE FACE OF SUCH ACTS. THE WARNING THAT THE REINSTATEMENT DOES NOT SET PRECEDENTS MAY BE AN ATTEMPT TO MOLLIFY CISNEROS AND OTHERS WHOSE HARDLINE POSITION HAS SUFFERED REVERSES OF LATE. HOWEVER, THE GOP ACTION WILL PROBABLY RESULT IN INCREASED PRESSURE TO REINSTATE THE 2,000-ODD WORKERS FIRED IN THE WAKE OF THE JULY 1977 GENERAL STRIKE. THE GOP'S RECORD OF HUMAN RIGHTS, ALREADY GOOD FOR A MILITARY REGIME, HAS BEEN ENHANCED BY THE REINSTATEMENT OF HUNGER STRIKERS. GREATER FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN INDEPENDENT
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MAGAZINES, EQUITABLE ACCESS TO NEWSPAPERS, TV AND RADIO FOR POLITICAL PARTIES PARTICIPATING IN THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY, AND THE RECENTLY DECREED POLITICAL AMNESTY (REF B) ARE ALSO INDICATIVE OF GROWING GOP SENSITIVITY TO HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES.
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